

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claims 1-12 (Canceled)

5 13. (Currently Amended) A method of marking a foodstuff with a mark comprising the steps of:

providing a foodstuff;

providing an ink free apparatus;

providing a spray gun capable of spraying a food grade coloring;

10 ~~moving the foodstuff past said ink free apparatus;~~

using said ink free apparatus to etch a mark on said foodstuff;

~~moving the foodstuff past said spray gun; and~~

using the spray gun to spray food grade coloring on said mark immediately after or up to

500 milliseconds after the mark has been etched.

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14. (Currently Amended) A method as defined in claim 13, further including the steps of providing a controller; and using said controller to control said ink free apparatus and said spray gun.

20 15. (Original) A method as defined in claim 14, further including the steps of providing a conveyor; placing said foodstuff onto said conveyor for moving said foodstuff past said ink free apparatus and said spray gun.

16. (Original) A method as defined in claim 15, further including the steps of providing a shaft encoder associated with said conveyor for recording the speed of said conveyor and outputting a signal to said controller regarding the speed of said conveyor.

5 17. (Currently Amended) A method as defined in claim ~~13~~ 14, further including the step of inputting a desired mark into said controller.

18. (Currently Amended) A method as defined in claim ~~13~~ 14, further including the steps of using said controller to determine a length of the mark etched on said foodstuff by said ink free
10 apparatus and thereafter determine the length of time the spray gun needs to be fired to cover said mark, and firing said spray gun said predetermined time.

19. (Original) A method as defined in claim 18, further including the step of using said controller to determine when said mark on said foodstuff is under said spray gun.

15 20. (New) A method as defined in claim 13, further including the steps of providing a conveyor; placing said foodstuff onto said conveyor for moving said foodstuff past said ink free apparatus and said spray gun.

20 21. (New) A method as defined in claim 20, wherein said conveyor is capable of moving at variable speeds.

22. (New) A method as defined in claim 13, wherein said spray gun is spaced from the foodstuff a minimum of three inches to a maximum of seven inches.

23. (New) A method as defined in claim 13, wherein said spray gun is spaced from said ink free apparatus by three inches to six inches.

24. (New) A method as defined in claim 13, wherein said ink free apparatus is one of a laser and a printer head.

25. (New) A method as defined in claim 13, further including the step of using an air knife for blowing air onto the foodstuff after the food grade coloring has been applied by said spray gun.